

An Agnostic Talk.

An Agnostic is one who does not deal in remote futures. He does not believe in Christianity or Spiritualism, and so does not pay its preachers or the medium. He does not believe in Materialism or Pantheism, and keeps out of them also. If he believes anything it is that the origin and destiny of man are unknown, perhaps unknowable, and that all the time a man employs trying to solve these mysteries might be used to some better purpose! Like a horse that has tried several times to pull a heavy load and failed, he becomes balky and sighs whenever he contemplates the difficulties behind and before him.

The Agnostic is on the fence between Spiritism and Materialism. He would get down on one side or the other if he could only feel certain that he was getting on the side of fact. He is too conscientious to pretend to believe that which his judgment says is not proven. He would be as glad as any one to know that there is a better time beyond the grave, but he is not the kind of a man to be led into a belief because such a belief might bring happiness. As a man can not feel that he has money unless he has the cash on hand, so an Agnostic cannot feel that he has a loving father in heaven, and an immortal soul to be lost or saved, unless he could interview this imaginary person and thing.

It is wonderful how little evidence it takes to convince some people that a god analagous to ourselves, only more perfect, exists, and that there will be a day of judgment on which the sheep will be separated from the goats, and the sheep will be sent to heaven to sing and the goats to hell to sing. In religion it takes credulity to "get there", for there is no evidence worthy of the name to support this religion.

In the courts it takes real evidence to convince, but in churches sham evidence is used entirely, and outside of church and religion Christians are as skeptical as other people. In obtaining a jury a man is not chosen because he is or is not a believer in the supernatural. Infidels are no more apt to clear a man than Christians. Neither will Christians convict a man on such evidence as they use in proof of their religion. All the evidence we have of the divinity of Jesus would not convict a wolf of killing sheep in Texas. The Christians would like to have more evidence and better proof of their creeds, but they cannot obtain anything but fancies.

In law the prisoner is given the benefit of a doubt and set at liberty unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Now unless Christians can prove clearly to all that their religion is more than fancy they ought not to think any less of

anybody for not believing it.

Men will not, as a rule, buy land unless they are sure the title is good, but they will invest in a chance of obtaining a foothold in the sweet fields of Eden on the other side of Jordan, although the title to this "happy happy land" is as cloudy as a London fog.

Agnosticism is purely scientific. It is founded on the fact that the human mind, like the telescope, has its limits. We can see a great way, but not as far as we try to see. The man who believes in God and immortality is like an astronomer who would look through his telescope and tell not what he sees, but what he would like to see in the distance. It is immoral from the Agnostic standpoint to make a life study of theology when all one's time is needed to learn science. An acquaintance with Nature is more pleasant and profitable in every way than an idle endeavor to know God and prove immortality.

Agnosticism is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Some Agnostics are more inclined to optimism and others to pessimism. Some would re-live their lives had they the power and others would prefer something better or nothing. The aggregate of human misery may outweigh the aggregate of human joy, or vice versa, or they may just balance. Agnosticism gives no hope nor produces any despair. It is too moral to deceive. Agnostics do not tell their little children ghost stories to make them better. They tell their children that a little child knows no less or no more about god and immortality than a grown person. A child ten years old can see as many stars as a grown person, and it knows just as much about God and hereafter as a grown person. A person cannot advance in knowledge of a subject when there is no ground on which to walk.

All hunters have seen dogs bark up the wrong tree; these dogs were sure there were squirrels or 'opossums among the branches or in the trunk, but when the tree was cut down and explored the dogs would have to admit that they were mistaken. Now these people who pray to God may some day have to admit they were mistaken about God being somewhere in the sky.

Agnostics do not deny that there is a power in the world that has created and does sustain plant and animal life. But they do not know the nature of this force. We see its work, much of it very beautiful, and all of it very wonderful, but cannot get even a glimpse of the worker. So little is known about our creator that if some one were to say, "He is water," no one could say knowingly "He is not water," or if some one were to say, "He is the sun," who could prove he is not the sun?

Neither is anything known about human consciousness after the change called death. In a later existence we may know more, we may know less or we may be the same old fools that we have always been.—[E. L. Merrill in Independent Pulpit.

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